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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet describes literacy programs currently in effect in Scandinavian countries and provides guidelines for the development of similar programs. Reasons for functional illiteracy in the industrialized world are discussed, and current and potential roles for public libraries in improving the situation are considered. Persons who are functionally illiterate with whom libraries can work are identified as unaccustomed readers, weak readers and writers, and the reading and writing handicapped, and it is posited that cooperation between libraries and specialists in the field and professional groups is a necessary prerequisite for achieving results. It is also pointed out that acceptance by the general public that functional illiteracy does not indicate a lack of intelligence will make it easier for weak readers and writers to seek assistance. Problems created by the small number of available easy-to-read materials in some of the Scandinavian languages and the perception that recorded books are only for the handicapped are also discussed. A number of Scandinavian projects and their results are then described, including Norway's local radio project and campaigns in the schools designed to stimulate children and adolescents to read more. Swedish literacy measures and projects are also described, as well as services that libraries can provide for dyslexic patrons and those with reading problems. The potential impact of information technology on public library users is also discussed. A brief review of central international measures and support systems for the functionally illiterate and suggestions for future activities conclude this report. (MAB)

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FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY:
WHAT PUBLIC LIBRARIES
CAN DO TO HELP PEOPLE WITH
READING AND WRITING PROBLEMS

AN IDEAS PAMPHLET



The IFLA Standing Committee for Public Libraries, 1989

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FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY

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FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY - BACKGROUND FOR THE WORK

In 1986, the IFLA's Standing Committee for Public Libraries appointed a working group to look into the rôle of the public libraries and their efforts to relieve illiteracy, with special emphasis on the Third World.

The working group also chose to inquire into the prevalence of functional illiteracy, which is a growing problem throughout the industrialised world.

The working group's Scandinavian representatives have therefore started work on producing an ideas leaflet, or methodic model which public libraries can use in their work to assist people who have difficulties in reading and writing. The Norwegian and Swedish directorates for public and school libraries are supporting this work with the necessary funds.

An ad hoc group consisting of representatives from public libraries and schools, and people who work with dyslexia sufferers, are responsible for the ideas leaflet. The working group has comprised the following members:

Barbro Thomas	National Council for Cultural Affairs, Stockholm; member of the IFLA's Standing Committee for Public Libraries
Ka-Jo Carlsen	Norwegian Directorate for Public and School Libraries
Brit Utvik	Lerenskog Public Library, Skårer
Mari Tangen	Norwegian Dyslexia Association, Oslo
Arne Andreassen	Director of Schools in Buskerud County, Drammen
Per Ovale	Tysvær Public Library, Grindafjord
Aud Nordgarden Grimstad	Fredrikstad Library/Østfold County Library, Fredrikstad; member of IFLA's Standing Committee for Public Libraries and Working Group on Illiteracy
Anne Berit Brandvold	Østfold County Library, Fredrikstad

THE ROLE AND ATTITUDES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Despite the fact that developments in society and in today's situation are not identical for all the Scandinavian countries by any means, there is still a greater degree of similarity than dissimilarity between them.

The compulsory school system has a long tradition. Compulsory schooling was for example introduced in Sweden in connection with the regulations for the first primary schools in 1842. The Norwegian law pertaining to the establishment of the basic school celebrates its 250th anniversary in 1989.

Compulsory basic education in Scandinavia now lasts for 9 years. Common to the Scandinavian countries is a high level of education, but also - if with some variation - a high degree of industrialisation. We live in a society which demands a high standard of reading proficiency. Standards of living are high. Books are no longer scarcities, but surplus goods, rather.

The public libraries in the Scandinavian countries have their roots in the popular education tradition. True enough, the ties which have existed between the public libraries and the organisations aiming to promote popular enlightenment and education have become weaker during the past few decades, but they still continue to work towards a definite goal of popular enlightenment.

The aim of the public libraries is to meet the need for culture and education, to offer quality literature, and to work for greater interest in reading.

As illiteracy tends to be regarded in practice as having been eradicated, the public libraries' degree of involvement in this particular field has been slight. The alarming reports received during the past few years stating that a not inconsiderable number of young people leave school without being able to read and write, have however been conducive to libraries beginning to involve themselves in these problems.

The problem of "book dropouts" has been much discussed, primarily in Denmark, but throughout the rest of Scandinavia, too. By "book dropouts", we mean the growing proportion of children and adolescents who stop being interested in reading.

The explanation for this is assumed to be that a new youth culture is in the process of developing, and that it is this music culture which interests the young most.

We might also point to the explosive growth of sound-and-picture media which has taken place in the industrialised countries. At the same time, reading as a subject learnt in school has declined in importance. In Denmark, for instance, the teaching of Danish as a subject has been reduced by 40 % between 1963 and 1983. On the other hand, we might also point to the fact that each Danish schoolchild borrows an average of 100 books a year, because the material in school libraries has to a great extent been made a part of the teaching, and replaces other school books. In Sweden, surveys carried out during the past few years have shown that approximately 96 % of all schoolchildren are library users.

There is however a growing awareness of the problems of functional illiteracy - which is expressed, among other things, in the fact that more libraries are making efforts to provide various forms of help to adults with reading and writing difficulties. Public support for the publication of so-called "easy-to-read" books, recorded books, and sound newspapers has existed for many years.

Even though insight into these problems has increased, it is nevertheless unlikely that libraries will come to play a decisive role in the task of relieving functional illiteracy. Public libraries do, however, have all the prerequisites for being able to play a far more important rôle than they have done up to now.

In that case, the libraries must not work in isolation, but must set up forms of co-operation with various bodies such as:

Schools and adult education

Study organisations

Local groups and societies, not least the organisations to which poor readers and writers belong

Mass media, such as local radio, local press, and TV.

The problem for the Scandinavian countries is not only a lack of books or other media specifically adapted for groups with poor reading skills. We have a relatively large production of recorded books, and if we take into account our total production of material, the number of easy-to-read books is on an acceptable

level. There are however certain differences between the individual Scandinavian countries in this respect.

Common to all, nevertheless, is the problem of belonging to a minority language area. The publication of media designed specifically for people with poor reading and writing abilities is dependent on actual state funding, and commercial publication is more or less an impossibility. Sweden has an annual production of about 25 easy-to-read books (i.e. titles). With regard to Denmark, it may be said in general that there is a large volume of production of easy-to-read books for children, somewhat less for young people, and very little for adults. The problem for the smaller language areas is to get publication aimed at small groups to pay its way. At present the Nordic Council of Ministers is discussing a proposal for extended collaboration in the publication of easy-to-read books.

A more serious problem is how libraries are to get information out to groups of weak readers. It is primarily in this area that co-operation is most needed.

We should also be aware of other types of action which are necessary if we are to be able to strengthen the rôle of the library in relation to this particular task:

1. We must have a conscious approach to the problem.
2. We must develop channels for information and form the information so that it reaches those it is aimed at
3. All library employees must increase their knowledge of the subject, and the task of relieving functional illiteracy must not only be the responsibility of specialists.
4. It must be simpler for poor readers to find their way around in libraries. It is important to give a lot more thought to how material is to be presented to the public.

In recent years, a good deal of experimentation has been done in attempts to reach functional illiterates. In many cases active attempts have been made to use recorded books. Owing to copyright problems most recorded books are reserved for certain groups (preferably the blind and near-blind). In this respect matters vary in Scandinavia. Denmark is the country with the most generous regulations in this area. Since 1983 the group of

weak readers and writers have had the right to borrow recorded books, and since 1 November 1988 it has been possible to borrow recorded books quite freely in Danish public libraries. That is, recorded books are treated as other material, and it is no longer necessary to refer to any special grounds for borrowing.

Even though the right to borrow recorded books has gradually been extended to encompass other groups, it is clear that the books have nevertheless acquired a "handicapped" taint. Very probably this has the effect of creating an obstacle when we try to address ourselves to groups with reading and writing difficulties without this being associated with a physical or mental handicap.

The libraries' arrangement and presentation of special media should be more neutral, such as can be achieved by not placing media for the handicapped and non-handicapped in the same place.

Even though the libraries neither can nor are supposed to play the main part in fighting functional illiteracy, they can do a great deal to improve and arrange things to suit this group without having to resort to any particularly costly measures.

It is a question of will, of awareness, and of preparedness; and an increasing interest has gradually been shown by many countries in setting up programmes to counteract illiteracy.

DELIMITATION/DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPTS

Functional illiteracy in the more restricted sense is not very widespread. If a person who, despite normal ability, fails to develop any reading and writing skills at all, he or she is a functional illiterate. This group constitutes approximately 2 % of the population, and represents a relatively constant proportion of all societies.

The concept of functional illiteracy is however often used in connection with persons who have great difficulties in reading and writing. The working group were however quick to agree that this is too strict a designation. Good, alternative definitions were suggested, such as unaccustomed readers, weak readers and writers, reading and writing handicapped, etc. These designations will consequently be used in the work as it continues.

Individuals with reading and writing problems constitute a major group within the population. They are normally equipped,

intellectually speaking, and have received a normal education, but function poorly in a modern, high-technology society. Great demands are made of people with regard to being able to read and write, both at work and in leisure time. We must recognise that these problems are likely to increase with the passing of time.

TARGET GROUPS

A necessary prerequisite for achieving results in this work is first of all to clarify which target groups the work is directed at, and also which organisations or individuals it may be possible to co-operate with. These can be defined as follows:

1. Poor readers and writers
2. The general public
3. Specialists in the field/professional bodies

1. Poor readers and writers

The number of people who are such poor readers that they are unable, or are only able with great difficulty, to comprehend the contents of an ordinary printed text, is very large, and far larger than previously thought. It is difficult to say how large a proportion of the population in the Scandinavian countries is affected, as they do not come under any of the categories registered as handicapped, and because this tends to a great extent to be a hidden problem which is often accompanied by feelings of shame in those afflicted.

For these reasons, we operate with an approximate figure of between 10 % and 20 % of the population who may have such difficulties. These are people who have broadly speaking received schooling, but who do not have the opportunity to acquire the kind of information which is necessary in order to function in society, either in private life or at work. There are those who spend their entire lives attempting to hide their problem, which again results in much mental suffering.

There are different reasons for these people not having learned to read and write, or for not having managed to maintain these skills which they once learned at school.

The working group has chosen to divide the poor readers and writers into three groups, which will enable us to see where and by what means the public libraries can play an active role in

helping them:

Group 1: People who have no command whatsoever of reading and writing skills

Group 2: People who have a certain command of reading and writing skills, but who are incapable of making much use of them

Group 3: People who master reading and writing skills, and who are in fact resourceful. They nevertheless have an unhappy relationship with reading and writing, and are aware that they have a problem.

The public libraries can indeed do something for all three groups; but it is also absolutely clear that if this is to happen, libraries will have to co-operate with other professional groups.

We cannot teach Group 1 to learn to read and write, but we can constitute an element which helps to improve their situation by providing them with suitable aids which can replace the printed word. With regard to Groups 2 and 3, we can supply active assistance, with specially adapted material, information, and via co-operation with other departments, institutions and organisations.

2. The general public

A comprehensive body of information concerning the problems of poor readers and writers is necessary in order to achieve positive results. This is primarily a question of attitudes and the knowledge that this problem is not associated with any lack of intelligence. Experience gained from the project "Norwegian in Practice" shows that a plentiful supply of information helps to promote understanding of the situation many weak readers and writers find themselves in. The project also showed that many were now willing to come forward and acknowledge their reading and writing problems. Libraries must be more aware of the needs of this group, to a far greater degree than they have been previously, both in the choice of materials, marketing, and presentation.

3. Specialists

In all the Scandinavian countries, special organisations exist which work for the benefit of poor readers and writers. In recent years, an international organisation has also been set up: the European Dyslexia Association. These organisations have qualified personnel who can give advice and guidance, and who can act as key people in supplying other professionals with the necessary insight and knowledge. By "other professionals", we mean library personnel, school employees, job centre personnel and personnel in other public services, the publishing trade, and adult education organisations. Other important sources of support are parents and other family members, etc.

NORWEGIAN MEASURES AND PROJECTS

The Local Radio Project, Rogaland

Purpose: The purpose of the project was to reach weak readers and writers over the ether, and to get them to come to the local library so as to see for themselves what the library had to offer. The intention was to stimulate interest in reading. The aim was also to help library personnel update their knowledge of problems connected with reading and writing skills.

Partners: The public libraries in Haugesund, Karmøy, Sveio and Tysvær; contact with the Norwegian Dyslexia Association; local pedagogical centres/PPT offices (Psycho-Pedagogical Services to Schools).

Marketing and time frame: Marketing was carried out via local radio. "Sound posters" aimed at different age groups were broadcast four times a day for a four week period. Target groups were children, adolescents, adults, and parents of children with reading and writing difficulties. Extensive listener surveys had been carried out beforehand, which enabled the "posters" to be broadcast at the most suitable times of day. These "sound posters" contained information to the effect that reading problems are common, and that having a reading problem does not indicate a low level of intelligence. Listeners were invited to the library, which also took the opportunity to publicise its

selection of easy-to-read books. The "posters" were broadcast in local dialect, and kept in a friendly and informal tone. The libraries received professional assistance from an advertising agency.

Updating the knowledge of library personnel: A brief "basic book" was prepared, and adapted to the needs of libraries of differing sizes. It contained the following:

The duties of the library in relation to dyslexia sufferers: information about suitable books, information about recorded books and how to borrow them; information concerning dyslexia; information about suitable courses currently being run in the local municipality/district.

Addresses for referring to specialists/professional bodies and interest groups: pedagogical and PPT services in local and neighbouring municipalities; education offices in local and neighbouring municipalities; local branches of the Norwegian Dyslexia Association; possible contact persons for help with training in reading.

Information about recorded books available for dyslexia sufferers; application forms for the recorded book library; catalogues of the available recorded books.

Criteria for books suitable for dyslexia sufferers.

Reference lists of easy-to-read books for differing age groups, available from both centrally situated and local sources.

Information about training programmes under the direction of the educational authorities aimed at weak readers and writers; their right to receive special teaching; the Adult Education Act, etc.

Brief basic information on dyslexia; what can/ought libraries do to help, and when should they refer people to other

specialist authorities?

To what extent can the sound library of the Norwegian Association of the Blind produce teaching aids for dyslexia sufferers? Are there any other special collections of study material which can be employed?

Provisional evaluation: The response has been good, especially from children and from parents of children with reading difficulties. The number of requests for help to find material for and about weak readers have quadrupled. While the number of easy-to-read books borrowed by adults has remained unchanged, the number of easy readers borrowed by children has increased by 50 %. We can probably also reckon on a long-term effect being achieved here. The report on the project is not complete at the moment of writing, but is expected to be ready for presentation during the first half of 1989.

Stimulating interest in reading - a key to language development
In order to prevent our society from producing an even greater number of weak readers and writers, owing to increased TV and video viewing, than we have now, it is extremely important that steps are taken to stimulate greater interest in reading as quickly as possible.

All children can easily be reached through the schools. In Norway in recent years we have thus been very absorbed in promoting measures designed to increase interest in reading, in co-operation with schools, or under the direction of schools.

Children need a solid amount of training in reading, roughly equivalent to about 6,000 to 8,000 book pages, in order to be good readers (according to Danish research worker Mogens Jensen). Children with reading problems need even more. Schools and public libraries are thus making a joint effort to stimulate the urge to read by making extensive use of children's books in reading training.

Reports from different reading stimulation projects during the

past few years present a picture of efforts which, while having achieved good results, also demand resources in the form of a great many books and a great many people with the right kind of resources, such as librarians and teachers. Co-operation is a necessity, and preferably on the basis of clearly established rules and agreements. Wherever conditions allow it, for instance, an advisory committee under the managing bodies of the public and school libraries can be appointed to help with library matters involving children and young people.

Measures aimed at stimulating the general urge to read vary both as regards time, content, and method. A brief survey of four different project types is given here. The public libraries have played a significant role in the planning and implementation of three of the projects, according to this plan:

Partners

Preliminary work/resources

Practical implementation.

A number of joint conclusions are drawn at the end.

The following measures for stimulating interest in reading are described:

1. "Stimulating interest in reading, and the use of literature in schools". Hystad School, Stord 1979-81.
2. NOKRA III "Read more", 1982-83. Sub-project in the prevention of reading and writing problems in primary schools.
3. Reading Campaign '86, "10,000 books in two months". A collaborative project between schools and libraries in three municipalities.
4. The project "Youth and Libraries", Deichman Library, Holmlia 1987.

1. Stimulating interest in reading, and the use of literature in schools. Hystad School, Stord 1979-81.

Partners: Hystad School and Stord College of Education.

Preliminary work/resources: The pupils were given access to a plentiful and varied supply of literature, ranging from adult books to picture books, but not including serials or comics. The reason for this was that this is the sort of stuff that children can easily get hold of and usually read a lot of anyway.

When the pupils started 5th grade (at age 12) about 300 titles were ready for registration. The pupils themselves prepared the books for use in the 5th grade. In this way they became familiar with the system used on the shelves and with using a card index, and were highly motivated when they finally began borrowing. By the time the project was concluded the book stock consisted of approx. 700 books.

Practical implementation: The project followed three classes from the 5th to 6th grade. In the 5th grade the pupils read at school for two hours per week, and in the 6th grade for one hour per week. In addition to individual reading at home and at school, the books were also used for reading aloud, for textual analysis and for group reading. Group reading took place four times with a different kind of set-up each time, so that the pupils could learn how to work with literature, and so that they after a time would be able to select procedures and ways of working which suited them, with a basis in the literature and their own interests. The pupils wrote book reports for each other, and all of them - "weak" and "strong" readers alike - received training in book presentation. Book reviews were also written. During the project period the pupils were visited by three authors. In the 5th grade the librarian from the public library visited the school and gave the pupils information about the library, talked about literature, and read to them.

2. NOKRA III "Read More" 1982-83. Sub-project in the prevention of reading and writing problems in primary schools

Partners: Notodden Public Library, the librarian from the office of the Chief Education Officer, the school librarian and consultant from Notodden Education Office, and parents.

Preliminary work/resources: Efforts were concentrated on

providing a very wide range of literature, with different genres and degrees of difficulty, and a great number of easily-read books, but no serials or comics (6-8 books per pupil). Some books were loaned out from the public library, pedagogical centre, and other schools. The librarian provided information about books to the pupils and to parents at parents' meetings. The educational authorities invested financially in the project, and the public library contributed by purchasing extra copies of books.

Practical implementation: The project followed two 4th and 5th grade classes for one whole year. Since then, over 100 classes have gone through a "Read More" project. The pupils read freely for three hours per week at school and were also allowed to borrow books to read at home. They were under no obligation to write anything about the books afterwards, but if they wanted to say anything about them and about their reading experience, they were given the opportunity to do so. So as to get them used to having an opinion about what they were reading, they were presented with a form when they had finished a book, and were asked to tick off in the appropriate box according to what they thought about the book. Group reading in which 4-5 pupils read the same book, provided variation, and made follow-up work such as summaries, dramatisation, role play, discussions, character sketches, biographical data on the author, etc., an appropriate part of the whole. During the start phase, and so as to motivate the pupils, the children's librarian visited the classes and talked about the library and about literature, and read to the pupils. The children in turn visited the public library, and were themselves visited at school by an author during the course of the year.

3. Reading Campaign '86 "10,000 books in two months". A collaborative project between three municipalities

Partners: The public libraries, teachers, pedagogical guidance services, municipal cultural and educational offices, children's growth environment office, and parents.

Preliminary work/resources: Each class was allotted 30 new

books, selected by teachers and librarians. The books were later incorporated in the school library collection. The librarians purchased the books and supplied information to teachers' councils, teachers and parents, and to boards of education. Financial support for the project was supplied by the Directorate for Public and School Libraries, Akershus County Board for Cultural Affairs, the Board of Primary and Lower Secondary Education, and the Working Committee of Parents' Councils. Ideas and finished plans for implementing the campaign were prepared by a project group which consisted of two representatives from each local authority and one from the County Library.

Practical implementation: The project stretched over two months, and followed 39 classes of 10 year-olds in the 3rd grade. The pupils read during school time and also at home, and some teachers chose to devote Norwegian lessons to books and to reading books during this period. Tasks were set in the form of written book reports/reviews. Many classes displayed their degree of reading activity on a "book barometer" in the classroom. This had a very stimulating effect on most pupils. Parents were also encouraged to contribute by reading to their children for 15 minutes each day. Each class marked the end of the campaign by holding a count of the number of books read per pupil, and by handing out reading diplomas, soft drinks, and buns. The average number of books read was 11.5 per pupil. Joint end-of-campaign events with associated book "cabarets" were also held with neighbouring schools. The County Library's mobile library unit was enlisted for transporting authors around to visit all the classes participating in the campaign.

4. The project "Youth and Libraries", Deichman Library, Holmlia, 1987-

This is a 3-year project which takes as its point of departure a number of surveys showing that adolescents read less and use libraries far less than younger children do. We need more information and greater experience concerning the reading habits of adolescents, and how they use libraries, with special reference to the 13-16 year-old age group. Is co-operation between public libraries, secondary schools, and pupils - in which steps

are taken to stimulate the interest in reading - likely to lead to pupils becoming more accustomed to using libraries, and becoming stable borrowers?

Partners: Holmlia Library, Holmlia School, pupils.

Preliminary work/resources: Holmlia Library and the pupils of Holmlia School have had an informal sort of co-operation going on for quite a long time. A 7th grade class of 14 year-olds has made regular class visits - a so-called adoption class - in which they have reviewed and discussed books. Current-interest and popular fiction and non-fiction books, comic books, and music (approx. 70 cassettes) were purchased.

An important point: the most popular books were put out onto the shelves in sufficient numbers as quickly as possible - young people's books rather than adult books. All literature concerning electronic data processing, cars, motor-bikes, motor-racing, body-building, pets, fashion, and beauty, is placed in the young people's section of the library. Comic books and magazines are popular and are purchased for use both in the library and the school. Both the school and the library subscribe to a newspaper.

Practical implementation: In the autumn of 1987 a start was made on fixing up a young people's corner in the library, in co-operation with the youngsters themselves. Space was set aside for listening to music. Contact was established with two collaborating classes, an 8th grade class of 15 year-olds and a 9th grade class of 16 year-olds. These two classes visited the library several times, where they read and discussed comic books, new acquisitions, etc. The pupils received homework assignments whereby they were asked to read one of the library's new acquisitions so as to develop their reading proficiency. Apart from this, several pupils also read the same book, and an attempt was made to get a discussion going on the subject. All the pupils chose a book from the catalogue entitled "This year's books", which they then read and reviewed, both verbally and in writing. The pupils in one class followed an author's production from the first idea to the finished book. In addition to this, some also studied particular genres, such as crime and thrillers, poetry,

the Second World War, etc. Work went on the whole time in close co-operation with the pupils, so that continuous reports were available on what was actually being done, and suggestions were made as to what sort of thing should be done in addition. The "Youth and Libraries" project has now been running for a year, and the project group are very satisfied with what they have managed to do and achieve so far.

Conclusion

It is difficult, and perhaps completely impossible, to measure the extent to which reading stimulation projects like this really have the desired effect. The trouble is that one never quite knows what the result would have been had no special reading stimulation measures been carried out. At the same time, there is a great deal to indicate that the weakest readers do in fact benefit the most. When we know that pupils need a reading speed of 80-85 words per minute in order to find coherence in what they read, it becomes an important task to help as many pupils as possible to get over this "magic threshold".

This view is substantiated by Ellen B. Øyno: Is reading enjoyment important? in *Magasinet for barnekultur*, No. 2/3 (1988), in which she gives an account of the results of a reading stimulation project. In one 5th grade class of 12 year-olds none of the pupils were below this threshold, whereas in a 3rd grade class of 10 year-olds there were 11 pupils with a reading speed of less than 70 words per minute, and two pupils with a speed of 80 words. In other words, 50 % of the class had a level of reading proficiency below the "magic threshold". What happened to these 13 pupils during the course of the school year? Nine of the thirteen had increased their reading speed so as to rise above the borderline. The results varied from an uncertain 84 words per minute to 145 words per minute without a single fault. It is also interesting to note that this group included two pupils who had a particularly high rate of book borrowing, registered with respectively 68 and 48 books each. The progress they had made from 54 to 109 words per minute, and from 41 to 94 words per minute, must have some connection with this.

Four pupils still have a reading speed below the "magic threshold", but these, too, have made considerable progress.

Some common conclusions may be drawn from the projects which have been concluded so far:

The children read far more than they otherwise would have done.

The children liked the ways of working, and learned new working methods.

The parents were very pleased with the way the projects were set up and reported that their children were reading more at home.

Teachers and librarians gained new experience with regard to working methods and co-operation, and were inspired to continue with reading stimulation measures.

Visits by authors are very stimulating.

As a group, one might say that the pupils changed their reading habits in the sense that they expanded their spheres of interest as far as reading material was concerned.

Reading a sufficient number of books in the 3rd grade (at age 10) is important (among other things because defect eyesight can be discovered earlier than would normally be the case.)

SWEDISH MEASURES AND PROJECTS

During the past few years, the National Council for Cultural Affairs in Sweden has been giving its support to a number of projects involving measures for stimulating interest in reading ^{by} ~~by~~, amongst others, people with reading and writing difficulties. The Town Library in Malmö, for instance, received state support in 1984/85 to work on improving information on recorded books to groups other than the blind and weak-sighted. Within the framework of the project, information was especially directed towards people with reading and writing problems. In order to reach out with this information, collaboration was established with the FMLS (Association to Fight Reading and Writing Problems), and with teachers working within the municipal adult

education programme. A very difficult problem to tackle was how to ensure that information about the library actually reached this group in particular.

Experience from these experiments was evaluated as very positive, and has formed the basis for continuing work. Since then, other libraries have been inspired by the experience of Malmö and have initiated similar projects.

At present the National Council for Cultural Affairs is making contributions to two projects directed towards helping, among others, groups of individuals with reading and writing difficulties. These projects are being run in the county libraries in Falun and Uppsala.

Experiments with an easy-to-read newspaper in Sweden

A trial period started in September 1984 and continued until the end of June 1986, financed for the most part by state funds. After the trial period was over, the easy-to-read newspaper was made permanent.

The idea is to publish a general newspaper with national coverage, but which is also well arranged and easy to read. Its eight pages contain national and international news, sports reports, cultural features, TV programmes, and one page is devoted to everyday happenings. Most of the features are illustrated.

The first edition of the newspaper, which was entitled "Nyhetsstidningen" came in October 1984. Weekly publication began in August 1985. The format is tabloid, and the usual print is livened up with one extra colour. There is also an edition available on cassette, which is meant mainly for the mentally handicapped who cannot manage to read the text.

This publication is aimed primarily at adults who have a slight or moderate mental handicap. In addition to this main group - stipulated to make up about 0.8 % of the Swedish population, or about 60,000-65,000 individuals - it is hoped that other groups, such as aphasics, the deaf, and others with reading and writing difficulties, can also benefit from an easy-to-read newspaper. These groups together account for at least as many individuals as the first group of handicapped. An easy-to-read newspaper can also be of help to schoolchildren and foreign

immigrants.

Marketing and subscription arrangements: Information about the publication has been spread in different ways - via organisations, special schools for the mentally handicapped, full-time institutions, sheltered workshops, and the mass media. Subscriptions have also been offered to other groups of handicapped, as well as to libraries, primary and secondary schools, etc. The subscription has been fixed at about the same rate as an ordinary daily newspaper, i.e. SEK 3.- per number. A yearly subscription fee for this weekly publication is fixed at SEK 150.-.

MEASURES IMPLEMENTED IN LIBRARIES - REQUESTS FROM DYSLEXIA SUFFERERS

For many individuals with reading and writing problems, seeking out a library feels unaccustomed and "unnatural". It will therefore often be necessary to take special steps designed to stimulate interest in reading and to draw those who are unaccustomed to reading or who are weak readers to the libraries (see the project descriptions).

When dyslexia sufferers come to the library, they should be able to find there personnel with the necessary knowledge as to what dyslexia is, what problems are involved in living with reading and writing difficulties, and what measures/aids are available which can make life easier for dyslexia sufferers. At the same time, libraries must be informed about what other bodies (such as PPT-offices, study organisations, schools, sound libraries, public offices, etc.) can do to help dyslexia sufferers, so that they can be referred there. Information concerning the law, and the rights of dyslexia sufferers should be available in libraries.

The Norwegian Dyslexia Association has carried out a survey in its local branches to find out which services Norwegians with reading and writing problems would like to find available from libraries. The following wishes emerged:

Easy-to-read books

Easy-to-read books must be available for all age groups. The books must be clearly marked, and placed where they are easily visible.

Recorded books

For many, recorded books are the only possibility they have of gaining access to literature. Dyslexia sufferers would like more recorded books. Libraries must know the current rules for lending out recorded books, and must help borrowers to fill in the application forms.

Adult education material

Material both for teachers who teach people with reading and writing difficulties, and for adults who wish to become more proficient in reading and writing by self-study. Information about adult education courses, co-operation with PPT-offices, pedagogical centres, etc.

Mother tongue instruction programmes on computer

More special programmes designed for mother tongue instruction have gradually made their appearance with the help of electronic data processing. In Norway, the programme "Norwegian in practice" is currently available, amongst others. These programmes should be found in all libraries.

Separate room with cassette player and computer

It is important that dyslexia sufferers be given the opportunity to try using a computer, so that they can judge whether it really can help them. An alternative here would be to hire a portable computer.

Service to the public

Help with filling in forms, writing applications, reading out short letters and other papers.

Events

Courses in reading comprehension/reading techniques. Groups in reading aloud for both children and adolescents/adults.

Easy-to-read newspaper

There is a desire for an easy-to-read newspaper to be published in Norway, along much the same lines as the Swedish newspaper already mentioned.

When someone borrows recorded books and/or easy-to-read books, the librarian should enquire as to whether the borrower has any other needs. Tact and care must of course be shown in such a situation. Because they were formerly labelled as "stupid" many

dyslexia sufferers are extremely sensitive. "Remember, we're not mentally handicapped", wrote one of the Dyslexia Association's representatives.

Things that all libraries can do for people with reading problems:

Learn about/acquire information about reading and writing problems

Subscribe to the informative leaflets and material produced by dyslexia organisations

Always let people know that the library has facilities to suit weak readers when giving information on the library's services

Make sure that easy-to-read books are clearly marked and placed where they are easily accessible

Contact the local branch of the Dyslexia Association. Offer to co-operate in arranging exhibitions and meetings. Let the association hold their meetings on the library premises.

Mark Dyslexia Day, which is 8 September. Since 1968, 8 September has been marked by organisations for people with reading and writing difficulties as UNESCO's international reading day. Set up exhibitions, make stands, arrange meetings and reading evenings, etc., in the library.

Take the initiative to start reading groups in the library.

Give some thought to those with reading and writing problems when preparing informational material, brochures, and book lists.

Give some thought to those with reading difficulties when displaying and setting up signs, labels, shelves, catalogues, and books.

COLLABORATING PARTNERS

The ideas leaflet must be made known and presented to all possible partners in the respective countries. It must also be adapted to suit each country's organisational and administrative structure.

On the national level

The inspectorate authorities (the Norwegian Directorate for Public and School Libraries) should send the leaflet for informational purposes to the relevant state departments such as:

The Ministry of Church and Education with the Basic School Council, RVO (National Council for Upper Secondary Education) and the Adult Education Council

The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs with the National Insurance Administration

The Ministry of Local Government and Labour, with the Directorate of Labour.

The Ministry of Justice, etc.

with a request to make it known in as many subordinate organs as possible, and to initiate interdisciplinary co-operation in this area. The ideas leaflet must be spread throughout the different library circles, and of course sent to all public and county libraries.

The Directorate for Public and School Libraries should present the report at a County Library meeting, and encourage the county libraries to pursue the work in their respective counties.

On the regional level

It may be appropriate to arrange day conferences and/or interdisciplinary meetings of various kinds with representatives from, among others, the following:

County Director of Schools

County Education Committee

Study organisations

County Employment Office

Directorate of Labour Inspection

Motor Vehicle and Driving Licence Inspectorate

in order to show what the library can offer and what it possesses with regard to material, and to invite the parts to co-operate on the regional plane.

The county libraries should also take up the ideas leaflet as a topic for discussion in their consultation meetings so that the public libraries in the municipalities can join in the discussions within a wider context. This will give the public libraries the necessary inspiration to carry on the work on the local plane.

On the local plane

The public libraries should take the initiative to arrange information meetings in the municipalities, and for meetings/seminars/conferences to take place with local partners such as:

- The local Board of Education
- The Social Security Office
- The local Job Centre
- Study organisations, etc.

Just how large such a meeting should be depends, among other factors, on the size of the municipality. In large municipalities it may be possible to hold several meetings with, for example, teachers, while in smaller municipalities it may perhaps be a good idea to co-operate across municipal boundaries. Contact with local branches of the Dyslexia Association is important in this connection.

Wherever close co-operation is developed, an agreement should be made concerning what the individual parts are responsible for, or which tasks they are to take care of. This is especially the case where co-operation between schools and public libraries is concerned, where guidelines already exist which should be used as a foundation on which to build.

Partners may also be attached to the library by giving organisations or societies (such as local dyslexia association branches) the opportunity to hold their members' meetings in the library - or by inviting the organisations or societies to the library to be shown around or given information on the facilities the library has to offer.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY - HELP OR HINDRANCE?

Information technology is rapidly gaining ground in the public libraries. (The concept of information technology is used in this connection in a very broad sense.) As a result of new technology, a number of new media have been developed: sound and picture media, for instance, such as sound cassettes, CD recordings, and video cassettes.

The technology is also making the storage and recovery of information from data bases and microfiche far more effective. Also internal library routines are affected by the technology, e.g. data-based catalogue and lending systems.

It is not necessarily ~~the case~~ ^{the case} that the transition to new technology will automatically be negative for people with weak reading ability. On the contrary, it can be an invaluable aid. Many new media are particularly well suited for use by groups with reading difficulties. Cassettes, recorded books, and video can all be offered as replacements for printed books. The libraries' printed informational material can be combined with information on video and cassette.

Wherever new technology comes into use, libraries should be aware of the effect on the different user groups. Efforts should also be made to assess whether there are any media which are particularly suitable for people with reading problems.

Automisation combined with a high degree of self-service can add up to an insurmountable obstacle for people with reading problems when they come to use the library. The library should then evaluate whether an increased degree of self-service can be combined with manual service.

CENTRAL MEASURES/SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Local measures are dependent on central authorities supporting the work with information through public channels and mass media.

As mentioned earlier, measures aimed at small groups are seldom financially self-supporting, and are generally dependent on funding. An example of this is the publication of specially adapted literature. Collaboration across the sectors, e.g. between the social sector, the school system, and culture, is also dependent on financial participation. This applies both on

the local and regional, and on the national, state level.

International measures

The working group has noted that an initiative has been taken in the Nordic Council of Ministers for a joint production of easy-to-read books. A number of conferences and seminars on easy-to-read literature have taken place with support from the Nordic Council of Ministers - most recently in the form of a "mini" book fair in Copenhagen. This is a prizable step which can inspire further developments both in Scandinavia and in other countries.

1990 is the UN's international year for fighting illiteracy. In this connection a centrally managed campaign should be set up, which must be included in the proposed budgets for 1990. Should it be possible to concentrate on a particular week, as on the pattern of Children's Book Week, etc., the week around 8 September should be chosen, as this is Dyslexia Day.

Other possible measures in this connection may be the broadcasting of "sound posters" on the radio, corresponding to those in the Rogaland project. Information must also be made available via the mass media - newspapers, radio and TV - also on the local plane.

Logo

An official logo should be designed which can be used in association with anything to do with reading and writing problems. The logo should be presented in connection with a week/campaign as suggested above. Some work is already being done to produce a logo, and we should therefore join in adopting the logo currently under preparation.

A logo will help to make visible the problem of reading and writing difficulties, and to make it more general. Such a logo should become as commonly seen and as widespread as the symbols for the physically handicapped and the blind (wheelchair and blind man with cane). It should not be a special "library" symbol, but should be comparable with a traffic sign. UNESCO has designed a logo for use in 1990, which the working group would like to see further developed and used also after the UN year is over.